

April 30, 2004

SUBJECT: WIC Program – Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 WIC Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Pilot Project Grants Request for Applications (RFA)

TO: WIC State Agency Program Directors
All States

In accordance with Public Law 108-199, the Food Nutrition Service (FNS) plans to award grants to WIC State agencies to support the development of cost effective EBT models. The FY 2004 RFA is open to *all* WIC State agencies, including those State agencies that have already received funding to develop EBT pilot projects, as well as State agencies that have not previously received funding for this purpose.

The FY 2004 RFA will consider projects proposing to test new and alternative technologies, including, but not limited to, a pilot to test on-line technology in partnership with a Food Stamp EBT system, which was identified as State Y in the FNS Strategic Five Year Plan for WIC EBT. FNS will remain technology neutral in its support of current and new WIC EBT initiatives.

We anticipate awarding between \$3 million and \$4 million in EBT grants for FY 2004. The total amount of funds awarded for EBT will depend on competing funding needs within the WIC Program and the merits of the grant requests received. EBT funds are intended for up-front capital investments and should be used to design, develop, and implement EBT systems. Funds also may be used to study the feasibility of enhancing or replacing existing EBT systems, or to upgrade systems that were operational prior to the adoption of applicable technical standards.

The FY 2004 EBT grant application process consists of two separate application procedures: (1) a limited competition open to State agencies with existing WIC EBT pilot project grants, and (2) a full competition open to *all* WIC State agencies. The specific application requirements are provided separately in the attached RFA.

The **limited competition** is open *only* to WIC State agencies that are requesting a cost amendment to their existing cooperative agreement in order to support the immediate needs of their EBT pilot projects or to bring their existing WIC EBT systems into compliance with applicable technical standards. Applications for funding under the limited competition are **due no later than 5:00 pm Eastern Standard Time (EST) on June 14, 2004.**

The **full competition** is open to all WIC State agencies for projects proposing to test an upgrade or alternative to current technology. States already operating EBT pilot projects may submit proposals to develop or to examine the feasibility of technologies that differ significantly from their current EBT solutions. In making funding decisions, FNS will carefully consider the additional workload and resources required to pursue two

alternative systems concurrently within a single State. Applications for funding under the full competition are **due no later than 5:00 pm EST on June 28, 2004.**

Applications may be mailed to FNS at the address noted in the RFA, or submitted electronically by accessing www.grants.gov <<http://www.grants.gov/>>. Applications submitted via direct e-mail or fax will not be accepted. This new government website was designed for electronic submission of grant applications and proposals.

Additionally, there is a new requirement for applicants of Federal Government awards to have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. If your agency has not yet obtained a number, you will need to contact Dun & Bradstreet at 1-800-234-3867 to register for a number. There is no charge to obtain a DUNS number. The DUNS number will serve as a means of tracking and identifying applications for Federal assistance and is required to be included on all applications for Federal assistance, regardless of the method they are submitted. The DUNS number is also required in order to complete the additional steps to become a registered Grants.gov user.

To apply online through www.grants.gov <<http://www.grants.gov/>> there are a number of other steps in the registration process that will be required of you before you may submit applications electronically including registering in the Federal Government's Central Contractor Registry (CCR). We urge you to visit the grants.gov web page (www.grants.gov <<http://www.grants.gov/>>) and click on the "Getting Started" tab *well in advance of the submission deadline* to get a thorough understanding of the steps you will need to follow to use this means of applying for Federal grant opportunities.

If there are any questions regarding the FY 2004 WIC EBT Pilot Project Grants Request for Applications, please contact Lisa Johnson of the Grants Management Division at 703-305-2848.

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Supplemental Food Programs Division

/ signed /

LAEL J. LUBING
Director
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Attachments